



2012 Foster Parent Implementation Law Annual Report

ChildServ foster care division has continued to evolve in developing strategies to enhance its communication systems, practices, resources, relationships with foster parents and education of the foster parents. ChildServ Traditional, Kinship, Project 90, Burgos, and Teen Mom Programs focuses on ensuring that families are provided with community resources and professional services to keep children safe. ChildServ provides support and training to foster parents so that they can offer their foster children a safe and happy life.

ChildServ approached this year's plan by identifying the deficiencies and strengths by gathering data and feedback from a panel of foster parents and staff. Their comments were collected, discussed, and incorporated into this year's plan during foster parent meetings and staff team meetings. The goal was to ensure that their suggestions and feedback became part of the plan.

List of deficiencies from previous plan:

Utilizing a mutual assessment tool

ChildServ has made it a standard practice to provide foster parents with quarterly information in the form of resources and updates. ChildServ solicited and encouraged their ideas to strengthen the services that the program staff provides. In addition, members of the placement services team are available for additional dialogue at the conclusion of each foster parent training. ChildServ hosts monthly foster parent trainings to provide caregivers with resources to aid them in caring for at risk youth. ChildServ encourages foster parents to be available for quarterly child and family team meetings to address various dynamics and offer their input as it relates to their foster care license or to the children in their care. These staffings are requested via letter, phone call or email to the foster parent(s). ChildServ will follow up with the staffing requests within five business days to ensure that this meeting time works with their schedule. Staffings includes the foster parent(s), foster child(ren), case manager, foster care supervisor, GAL (guardian ad litem) or any other professionals that are associated with the case. In addition the Licensing Unit also consults with foster parents via phone or email to follow up on the status of new placements or children that may have adjustment problems in the home.

Early identification for at risk children (narrative #8):

ChildServ begins the initial process of placement stabilization for children/adolescents at risk of placement disruption by assessing the needs of the child/youth and foster parent(s). This interaction takes place in the family home/environment in order to capture the dynamics of the family unit and to develop a team approach to reduce the barriers. The frequency of in-home visitation depends on the dynamics that are presented to the team members of the ChildServ, including the case manager, program supervisor, licensing worker and supervisor, the clinical unit and program director. All of these

members are available via cell phone and pager twenty four hours daily and seven days per week, in accordance with our agency response policy.

In addition, ChildServ offers several trainings throughout the calendar year to provide foster parents with trainings on placement stabilization. The training topics include: understanding and implementation of behavior modification plans, medication monitoring, fostering internal motivation and cooperation, and building self-esteem.

Foster Parents attending monthly meetings

ChildServ continues to encourage foster parents to attend the monthly meetings to build relationships with other foster parents and to receive information to help them care for their foster children. ChildServ developed an email address specifically for our foster parents (fosterparents@childserv.org) as a vehicle to communicate and encourage meeting participation. ChildServ uses the foster parent evaluations forms after each foster parent meeting and/or training to gather information on suggestions to increase the number of participants at the meetings. ChildServ has considered hosting two meetings on training days, one in the morning and another in the evening, as a way to allow more foster parents to participate in trainings. The foster parents felt this was an excellent suggestion.

Bilingual Trainings

ChildServ continues its efforts in providing more training for Spanish speaking foster parents. ChildServ is collaborating with the Department of Children and Family Services to be a host agency to provide in-services trainings as well a Spanish speaking Pride Trainings. ChildServ also offers trainings presented in Spanish for our current foster parents.

Successful Implementation

Recruitment

ChildServ was successful in two areas related to recruiting prospective foster parent applicants to become licensed providers. Existing foster parents were provided with detailed information regarding the licensing procedures and encouraged their support in providing the community with information about the need for more foster parents. Foster parents are given a monetary reward once their referral becomes a licensed foster parent and a child is placed in the home. Foster parents have volunteered their time to transport prospective foster parents to our monthly foster parent orientation. ChildServ has developed an email database so that foster parents and prospective foster parents can remain aware of upcoming recruitments events and they are encouraged to invite neighbors, friends and family members to the meetings.

CAFCA

ChildServ implemented a new recruitment initiative called ChildServ's Ambassadors for Foster Care and Adoption (CAFCA). This is a group of specially trained foster parents who help publicize the importance of foster care and the need for individuals and families in their community to step up to the challenge of becoming licensed foster parents and provide safe home environment for children that are placed in substitute care by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. This initiative has had initial success because the members of the group participated in several communities speaking engagements, attended media events and hosted recruitment parties. As a result the agency received positive responses and several new referrals for potential foster parents.

Foster parent Annual Appreciation Luncheon

The foster parents asked to be involved in organizing ChildServ's annual foster parent appreciation luncheon. They selected the entertainment for the event, encouraged other foster parents to attend and helped create the invitation. The luncheon received positive feedback and gave them the opportunity to see how much they are appreciated. During the event foster parents were recognized and given certificates of appreciation. The event caught the attention of our Hispanic families who also attended the luncheon.

Adoption Luncheon

Every year in November, ChildServ celebrates National Adoption Month. In collaboration with our Wendy's Wonderful Kids Program, ChildServ honors all of our adoptive foster parents and children who have been adopted. This group focuses on the importance of ensuring that every child has the opportunity to have a "forever family". We honor our adoptive families with a formal luncheon that demonstrates our appreciation for them opening their home and providing a nurturing environment for children and adolescents in need.

Foster parent email stream-"Going Green with Communication"

ChildServ developed an email database to increase the communication between the agency and foster parents. Foster parents are emailed notification on new DCFS/ChildServ policies, foster parent monthly correspondences, and foster parent newsletters. Childserv has successfully obtained emails from over 60% of the foster parents and will continue to encourage foster parents to provide their emails. The licensing unit obtains email contacts during monitoring visits, during the foster parent orientations and also at the monthly meetings. This is a more efficient way to reduce paper, increase effective communication and provide foster parents with a quicker way to receive information.

Assessing foster parents' ongoing training needs

ChildServ's staff has continued to keep foster parents informed of all schedule in-service trainings by phone calls, email, letters, and on the ChildServ's website. ChildServ encourages all foster parents to attend the monthly meetings. Foster parents attending the ChildServ's trainings receive credit hours towards their required renewal hours. The meetings help educate them on issues to assist them with children who are experiencing emotional or behavioral problems. Also, the licensing staff is available at the trainings to address any licensing standard questions and explain new standards.

ChildServ discovered that more foster parents were using the Department's Virtual Training site to track their training hours. Foster parents are becoming more proactive in obtaining required training hours through this site and are being self-sufficient in obtaining the required licensing training hours. ChildServ uses the Caregiver In-service Training Attendance Form to ensure that foster parents are receiving credit hours for their participation in ChildServ's monthly foster parent meeting. This form is then forwarded to the Department Training Unit.

Resource Guide

ChildServ recognized that foster parents were in need of community resources to provide them with additional support in caring for the foster children. ChildServ developed a resource guide that lists a variety of community resources such as medical clinics, day care facilities, free cultural activities, youth programs, food pantries, local WIC office and other community resources to better support them in stabilizing the foster

children. This guide is shared with all foster parents and especially with new foster parents.

Most Challenging Implementation

Increasing Foster Parent Attendance in monthly meeting

ChildServ continues to encourage foster parents to participate in the foster parent monthly meetings and to become more involved with the Foster Parent Advisory Council (FPAC) and the CAFAC. ChildServ continues to survey those who regularly participate in the meetings and solicit suggestions on how to increase the number of foster parents in attendance. Previously the attendance ranged from 10-12 foster parents attending trainings and now with the new location, this number has doubled to 20-22 foster parents in attendance. We will still strive to increase this number of attendees even further. ChildServ has moved the meetings to different locations to accommodate more foster parents. ChildServ sends out letters, newsletters and emails on the upcoming foster parent meetings with the training topics. ChildServ also sends the foster parent email blast to alert them of the upcoming meetings with the topic of the training.

Sections of the Plan that were not implemented at all

All sections of the 2011 Plan were implemented.

Development of the Plan

A Foster Parent Law Steering Committee met several times to review the plan and to make necessary revisions based upon case worker and foster parent feedback and DCFS Foster Parent Law requirements. These meetings took place July 12, 2011, August 18, 2011, September 9, 2011, September 16, 2011, September 20, 2011, September 28, 2011, October 20, 2011 and October 28, 2011. Foster parents were instrumental in developing this year's plan. As a result of several meetings with ChildServ's foster parents, they recommended that they take responsibilities in communicating directly with other foster parents to help increasing participation. After all revisions were incorporated into the plan, foster parents and staff were asked to fully endorse the plan and provided signatures indicating their approval.

Staff Training on the Plan

The training and involvement of staff in the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan is comprehensive and multifaceted. During the month of September staff members were trained on the plan and asked to give feedback. The previous plan was disseminated to start the review process and to begin incorporating changes. Staff shared new policies to be included in the plan. Staff members were required to read different parts of the plan and give their feedback. The information was gathered by a recorder, discussed and integrated into the plan.

The Plan's Impact on Service Delivery

ChildServ's management team reviews statistical data quarterly to monitor trends. The foster care teams incorporate action steps within their work plans to ensure that elements of the Foster Care Implementation Plan is incorporated. The implementation of the plan has helped ChildServ create a cohesive team approach to stabilizing placements and supporting foster parents. The plan also provides a concrete outline for ensuring the safety and well-being of children in foster care. Furthermore, it creates additional checks and balances where foster parents can openly critique our work and provide recommendations for better service delivery. Communication between the case management, licensing staff, and foster parents continues to increase as well as improve

the quality of interactions. ChildServ is more accountable to foster parents as a group, resulting in better relationships and improving the quality of care for our children

Plan Made Available to Foster Parent's

The Foster Parent Law Plan is provided to all foster parents in a number of ways; the plan is posted on Childers's website (www.Childserv.org), available at the monthly trainings, posted on the foster parent resource board located at the sites and the plan was hand delivered to foster parents by either the case manager or licensing coordinator. All documents are available in English and Spanish.

Grievances

There were no Appeal/Grievances during this implementation year.

Initial Development for review of Appeal/Grievance Policy & Procedure

The Foster Parent Law Steering Committee reviewed the current internal appeal/grievance policy and no changes were necessary. To assist in training foster parents and staff, the Committee developed a summary version of the policy that was incorporated into our 2012 Plan. Foster parents are trained annually on the appeal/grievance policy and procedure at the foster parent monthly meetings. This policy is available in English and Spanish and is available at each ChildServ locations, on the ChildServ Website, and is hand delivered to foster parents that are not able to attend scheduled meetings.

Foster parents involved on the development of the plan include:

- Gladys Gray
- Fredia Fox*
- Felesa Melvin Childs**
- Nelson Willis*
- Sheila Harper
- Judy Rimmer
- Annie Davis
- May Gardner*
- Tara and Charles King
- Gloria Maxie*
- Janet Kyles
- Diana Shannon
- Louise Johnson
- John Hargrove
- Jeanne Wright
- Vivan and Patrick Bellows
- Essie Watkins

*Foster Parent Advisory Board Member

**ChildServ Ambassadors for Foster Care & Adoption

Respectfully Submitted,

Maurice Dorris, MS
Licensing Supervisor